

Providence City Plan Commission

January 19, 2021



AGENDA ITEM 4 ▪ DISCUSSION ON SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT CHAPTER

OVERVIEW

PROPONENT: Office of Sustainability

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Discussion on proposed changes to the Sustainability and the Environment chapter of the Comprehensive Plan

Discussion

The proponent, the Office of Sustainability, is proposing a comprehensive change to the Sustainability and the Environment chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Leah Bamberger, Director of the Office of Sustainability, will make the presentation. Revision of the chapter is based on policy changes and plans that have been enacted since the last revision of the comprehensive plan. The challenges, and opportunities sections have also been updated based on developments that have occurred. The presentation will focus on the proposed changes and how they differ from the current language.

Climate and Sustainability

Intro

Goal 1: Protect and preserve the natural environment and strive to make Providence a sustainable, equitable, low-carbon, and climate resilient city.

Providence's landscape and environment have been dramatically altered by the industrial revolution and urbanization. Providence's economic success came at a human and environmental cost. It depended on cheap cotton from the south, which was grown and harvested by slave-labor; indigenous communities lost their access and rights to the land; and rivers were polluted with toxic chemicals as mills and other industries dumped untreated waste into them. More than 200 years later, our post-industrial landscape remains contaminated with lead that poisons 10 to 30% of our kindergarten age children, and several neighborhoods have among the highest rates of childhood asthma in the state.

Providence has come a long way in acknowledging and addressing these harms but there is still a long way to go to becoming an equitable, sustainable city. Past comprehensive plans have prioritized sustainability. The City's Greenprint (2008) report set forth strategies to address climate change. Sustainable Providence (2014) created a holistic plan for meeting a broad set of sustainability goals. The 2019 Climate Justice Plan centered Providence's frontline communities in the fight for a healthier, more equitable, climate resilient city.

Through these plans and processes, we have learned and evolved. We now know that burning fossil fuels is causing our planet to warm to dangerous levels and emits co-pollutants that have disproportionate impacts on the health of low-income communities of color in Providence. We understand that changing light bulbs is not going to solve the climate or environmental crisis. If we are to avoid catastrophic climate change, we must stop burning fossil fuels by 2050. This means we need to fundamentally transform the energy system that fuels our economy and we must reconnect with the natural systems that sustain us. Perhaps most importantly, we have learned that we need an inclusive and equitable approach to addressing our climate and environmental crises. When we do this, we get solutions that are rooted in community and result in the systemic and transformative change that we need.

The Climate Justice Plan, released in 2019, puts forth a vision for a sustainable city where one's race or zip code no longer determines health or economic outcomes. Where decisions are made collectively to allow those who are most impacted to have the greatest say. Where land stewardship is valued over ownership. Where access to clean water and land is not just a luxury for the wealthy, but a fundamental human right. This plan will set a path for Providence, but it is up to the residents and businesses in the City to make sure that we take it.

Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

Changes

Commitment to Climate Action. In 2015, Mayor Jorge O. Elorza joined the Global Covenant of Mayors, committing to climate action. In 2016, Mayor Elorza signed the Executive Order on Climate Action which commits Providence to becoming a carbon-neutral city by 2050 and sets goals to prepare Providence for the impacts of climate change. It outlines strategies and near-term actions such as setting an interim greenhouse gas reduction goal; assessing the social, infrastructural, and economic impacts of climate change; and taking carbon emissions and the impacts of climate change into account in all planning and decision making processes. These climate goals were incorporated into a 2016 update to the 2014 Sustainable Providence Plan.

Climate Resilience. The Office of Sustainability has hosted several workshops and trainings to help identify and prioritize climate risks and solutions. The City was recently selected to participate in the state's Municipal Vulnerability Program, and has made Climate Resilience a key evaluation criteria for investments made through the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Environmental and Racial Justice as a Priority. The Office of Sustainability has been recognized as a national leader in addressing racial equity in its work. The Providence Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC) was created in 2016 to lead this effort. This focus on equity required Providence's community to reclaim and receive acknowledgement as subject matter experts on the consequences of the City's past actions. Government employees and community members attended Undoing Racism trainings facilitated by The Peoples' Institute for Survival and Beyond.

Just Providence Framework. Adopted in 2017 by the Office of Sustainability, this Framework encourages taking actions that allow and encourage frontline communities to enjoy their fundamental right to quality of life and liberty and to live free from discrimination and oppression, acknowledges that people are sacred and respects their cultures, and co-creates and co-leads governance. This effort was led by community organizers and frontline community members of the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee.

Climate Justice Plan. Released in 2019 in collaboration with the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee, the Climate Justice Plan includes seven key objectives, 20+ targets, and 50+ strategies aiming to create an equitable, low-carbon, climate resilient city. The Plan addresses the systematic changes necessary in our governance structures, economic system, and community health to ensure a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels.

Transparency and Accountability. Transparency is essential for the City to be held accountable to its climate, equity, and sustainability goals. The Sustainability Dashboard, launched in 2016, is an online resource that publicizes data monitoring the City's progress in

implementation of the Sustainable Providence Plan. The Dashboard is being updated to include metrics from the Climate Justice Plan. The Environmental Sustainability Task Force, composed of nine community members, is responsible for reviewing the data and progress towards citywide goals reported by the Office of Sustainability. This helps provide accountability for the City's environmental agenda and communication to increase transparency. ESTF meetings are open to the public and as of 2020 are also live-streamed.

Green Justice Zones. Green Justice Zones (GJZs) use a collaborative governance model with frontline communities to make investments in sustainability and equity in neighborhoods that have been disinvested in and are overburdened with pollution. A key strategy of the Climate Justice Plan, GJZs aim to address the priorities and concerns of the neighborhood. This concept was developed based on a successful model from the [City of Minneapolis](#). Here in Providence we are starting with two Green Justice Zones—one in the near-port community of South Providence and Washington Park, and the other in Olneyville. These two neighborhoods have the highest concentration of Environmental Justice communities according to the EPA's EJ Index tool.

Reducing Toxic Chemical Use. Providence aims to reduce neurotoxic chemical exposures in its parks and green spaces throughout the city. In 2020, the City highlighted the efforts of the Parks Department to limit exposure to chemical-heavy pesticide and fertilizer treatments as well as the use of unsafe building materials. With the parks as a best management practice, Providence will launch a Pesticide Free PVD campaign targeted at reducing the use of pesticides in residential lawns and gardens, as well as other toxins in the home.

Sustainable Procurement Practices. The City is working with partners to develop a procurement policy that reduces the purchase of products containing neurotoxic chemicals and creates incentives for healthy, sustainable, low-impact products.

Plastic Bag Ordinance. The Retail Plastic Bag Reduction ordinance was unanimously approved by Providence City Council on Earth Day, April 22, 2019 and subsequently signed into law by Mayor Elorza. The ban went into effect October 22, 2020, prohibiting retailers from offering single-use plastic bags at the checkout counter. Any checkout bag provided to customers by retail establishments must be a reusable bag or a recyclable paper bag. The ban seeks to reduce the number of plastic checkout bags in the City, curb litter in the streets, protect our waterways and marine environment, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Dredging of the Providence River. Sections of the Providence and Woonasquatucket Rivers in downtown Providence and Waterplace Park were dredged in 2019. The project was funded and supported by Rhode Island voters as a part of the Clean Water and Green Economy Bond and has improved local ecology and commercial, and recreational activities. A second phase of dredging is in the planning stages.

Providence Stormwater Innovation Center. The Providence Stormwater Innovation Center (PSIC) launched at Roger Williams Park in the summer of 2020 as a partnership between the

Providence Parks Department, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy, and other partners. The goal of the PSIC is to demonstrate to communities throughout Rhode Island and Southeast New England strategies for improving urban water quality and associated wildlife habitat through the use of innovative green stormwater practices. A wide range of green infrastructure structures and practices will provide hands-on training for municipalities, engineers, construction companies, and scientists who will learn from the successes and failures of their design, implementation, and maintenance.

Investments in alternative transportation. In 2020, the City released the Great Streets Plan, which establishes a framework for public space improvements to ensure that every street in Providence is safe, equitable and sustainable. Over the next five years, the City's FY2020-FY2024 Capital Improvement Plan identifies nearly a twenty-million dollar investment in Great Street initiatives, including streetscape and placemaking projects, safety improvements, traffic calming, and the creation of Urban Trails. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) serves as the advisory body to the City on issues pertaining to bicycling and walking. In August 2019, the Pedestrian Bridge spanning the Providence River opened to the public, connecting Fox Point and the Jewelry District. In January 2020, the 1.4-mile Downtown Transit Corridor opened, providing peak bus service connecting Rhode Island's largest employment hubs and institutions to downtown and adjacent neighborhoods on an average of every five minutes.

Electric Vehicle Procurement. In 2020 the City took advantage of state incentives to install electric vehicle charging stations at the Public Safety Garage. There is also funding set aside in the master lease program to procure electric vehicles to replace some of the older City fleet vehicles.

Renewable Energy. The City launched a solarize program in 2016, which boosted residential solar installments. Since the end of 2016, solar installments have grown by over 100%, contributing 3.75 megawatts (MW) to the grid. As of December 2019, 7.41 MW of solar PV capacity had been installed throughout Providence. In 2019, the City virtually connected to a 23 MW solar farm that is generating credits that cover almost 70% of municipal electricity consumption.

Energy Benchmarking and Disclosure. The City has been tracking its energy use using EPA's Portfolio Manager since 2010. In 2016, the City released its first annual Municipal Energy Report, reporting and disclosing its energy use to the public. The Office of Sustainability is working closely with the City Council to develop a citywide energy reporting and disclosure ordinance.

LED Streetlights. Completed in 2016, the Street Light Conversion Initiative upgraded street lamps around the city to LED, decreasing energy use and potentially saving \$3 million annually.

Community Choice Aggregation. In 2019, the City Council authorized the Office of Sustainability to develop a Community Choice Aggregation plan with the goals of increasing

renewable energy supply in our electricity mix, and stabilizing affordable energy rates. Such plan was approved by the Council and submitted to the Public Utilities Commission in the summer of 2020. The City hopes to launch the program in early 2021.

Challenges

Sustainable and Affordable Housing. 57% of renters outside of the East Side are housing cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Furthermore, buildings account for 70% of the city's carbon footprint. The Climate Justice Plan calls for the City to ensure access to dignified housing and affordable, efficient and clean energy for all Providence residents, eliminate fossil fuel use in all buildings, and ensure that residents who benefit from energy efficiency improvements are not displaced.

Recycling Contamination. In 2018, 10,391 tons of contaminated recycling was rejected from RIRRC, costing the City of Providence approximately \$715,697. According to a 2015 study by the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC), about half of plastics that end up in Rhode Island's landfill are recyclable. Addressing recycling contamination is essential to preventing recyclable materials from ending up in Rhode Island's landfill and avoiding the associated tipping fees.

Solid Waste. Rhode Island's Central Landfill is expected to reach its capacity by 2024. When this happens, waste disposal costs will increase substantially as the state seeks alternative places and processes to manage its trash. In 2018, the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation estimated that 32% of the state's municipal landfill waste was food and other organic materials that could be composted. Addressing waste reduction and diversion through initiatives such as composting will require innovation and collaboration between the City and community groups. Ongoing and emerging home and business composting operations should be encouraged and supported by the City.

Transitioning to a Clean Industrial Waterfront. Providence's industrial waterfront is a significant contributor to local air pollution, including smog and soot. The proximity to Route 95 adds to this burden. As a major transport hub for fossil fuels, the Port of Providence's significant local health impacts disproportionately affect low-income communities of color who live near the industrial waterfront. The Climate Justice Plans calls for more efficient shipping practices and creating a fee on port emissions as we move towards a clean and decarbonized port.

Structural Racism and White Supremacy Culture. The exploitation of natural resources during the Industrial Revolution is inextricably linked to the exploitation of people of color through the slave trade in Rhode Island. In this way, climate change and structural racism are historically rooted in the same exploitation. In Providence, structural racism continues to be enacted through many instances of environmental injustice. For example, health outcomes for people of color in Providence are lower compared to that of white people. The City must combat white supremacy culture by incorporating collaborative governance, which shifts from

community engagement to ownership and ensures that communities impacted by environmental racism have political power and influence.

Opportunities

Offshore Wind. The exponential growth of offshore wind along the East Coast presents an opportunity for Providence's industrial waterfront. The City should prioritize development in the port by continuing efforts to ensure that the offshore wind industry can site their supply chains at Providence's industrial waterfront while being held to local workforce, environmental, and economic development targets.

Community-scale Composting. Providence's Office of Sustainability, in partnership with Zero Waste Providence, continues to explore neighborhood-scale composting solutions. The City should pilot a city-wide community composting program that incorporates various models including curbside pickup, drop-off locations, and at-home composting. This composting program must not economically or otherwise burden communities of color.

Carbon Sequestration. Prioritizing deep root, native plantings in parks and other public green spaces, and adding compost to managed soils will maximize carbon sequestration. This is an important opportunity for the City in its pursuit to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Green School Yards. Through the Healthy Communities Office and Parks Department, the Providence Green Schoolyard Initiative helps schools improve their grounds by adding school gardens, nature education space, stormwater reclamation sites, tree canopy, and other green improvements.

Community Solar. Community solar allows residents with barriers to physically installing rooftop solar (such as due to financing, renting, condo associations, or historic district restrictions) to connect to virtual solar development and reap the financial and ecological benefits of renewable energy.

Objective SE1: Environmental and Climate Justice

Implement a just and equitable approach to transitioning away from fossil fuels and ensure low-income, communities of color no longer suffer disproportionately from environmental impacts. To do this, Providence must ensure that those who are most impacted by the climate crisis in Providence are centered in the decision-making process for crafting and implementing solutions.

Strategies

- A. Include at least two members from the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee or other Frontline community members on the Environmental Sustainability Task Force.
- B. Partner with frontline community organizations on every major initiative using the collaborative governance model outlined in the Climate Justice Plan.
- C. Train City staff on racial equity, anti-racism, environmental racism, environmental justice, and implicit bias.
- D. Establish a diversity hiring target to shift municipal workforce to be more reflective of the community.
- E. Adopt the Just Providence Framework citywide.
- F. Create a dedicated funding stream to support implementation of the Climate Justice Plan
- G. Report on key metrics and implementation actions that advance Providence towards targets set forth in the Sustainable Providence Plan and Climate Justice Plan. This reporting should happen annually, and should be easily accessible to the public. It must also include measuring and monitoring the level of environmental burden and investments being made in each neighborhood.
- H. Advocate for and support a state-level Climate Justice Working Group.
- I. Establish Green Justice Zones in Frontline Communities. Green Justice Zones use a collaborative governance model with frontline communities to make investments in sustainability and equity in neighborhoods that have been disinvested in and are overburdened with pollution. The City would provide resources to support community members in developing action plans alongside City officials to address the priorities and concerns of the neighborhood. Green Justice Zones seek to achieve health equity, improve quality of life, and climate resilience in frontline communities. They should consider the following:
 - a. Microgrids in critical community spaces (i.e. schools, elder care facilities, community centers, etc.) to enable local energy generation, storage and consumption, add capacity and stability to the larger grid, and operate independently at times.
 - b. Resiliency Hubs.
 - c. Participatory budgeting processes.
 - d. Weatherization, energy efficiency, electrification, and on site renewables, especially for low income community members.
 - e. Training and job opportunities in the above for local community members.
 - f. Policy tools such as zoning to prevent the burden of additional pollution in frontline communities.

Objective SE2: Climate Resilience

Achieve citywide carbon neutrality by 2050, and assess and prepare for the impacts of climate change using a racial justice lens.

Strategies

- A. Measure and report community-wide greenhouse gas emissions at least every three years.
- B. Advocate for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) funding to support environmental justice priorities.
- C. Develop a long-term climate resilience and adaptation plan: Partner with the REJC and other frontline communities to ensure those most impacted by the impacts of climate change are centered in the process of designing and implementing a plan to prepare the city for the impacts of climate change. This plan should examine the impacts of heat, riverine flooding, coastal storms, sea-level rise and other related effects of climate change. It should focus on areas along the Woonasquatucket River, the port, and the Hurricane Barrier.
- D. Consider climate impacts and greenhouse gas emissions in all planning and decision-making processes, including but not limited to capital planning, neighborhood and comprehensive planning, and city boards and commissions.
- E. Address underlying community stresses including housing access, food security, environmental justice, and economic stability to increase climate resilience.
- F. Partner with surrounding municipalities, regional partners, and the State to achieve broader impact.
- G. Expand community facilities for cooling such as cooling centers and water park hours and access. Ensure consistency in operations and communication to the public.
- H. Establish resilience hubs in frontline communities. Resilience hubs are community-run mutual aid centers that can address community needs during disasters and times of normalcy.
- I. Ensure critical facilities have back-up battery storage and microgrids. Replace diesel-burning generators with on-site solar plus battery storage.
- J. Assess and address climate vulnerability and resilience at the port-area.
- K. Eliminate gas leaks in Providence through statewide legislation that requires the utilities to promptly address leaks.
- L. Deploy green infrastructure and other nature-based solutions in public spaces and require similar practices citywide to address stormwater management and reduce flooding.

Objective SE3: Community and Environmental Health

Create the conditions for healthy air and community spaces free from pollution for all Providence residents, with a focus on Port-area neighborhoods and other communities facing the highest rates of pollution.

Strategies

- A. Expand and improve green spaces. Partner with community organizations to expand green spaces and parks in frontline communities including the following priorities:

- a. Incorporate community priorities and maximize opportunities for new open space and climate resiliency investments.
 - b. Employ community members in the stewardship of green spaces.
 - c. Prioritize deep root, native plantings in parks and other public green spaces to maximize carbon sequestration, eliminate the need for fossil fuel-based fertilizer and pesticides, and educate the community on the climate and biological benefits of such planting and land use practices. Work with the state to do the same, with an eye towards managed soils to increase carbon sequestration.
- B. Advocate for legally binding climate pollution reduction and clean energy targets at the state-level. Ensure targets incorporate cumulative impact analysis that considers effects of past and current pollution.
 - C. Working with the Green Justice Zones, reduce pollution and improve community health through zoning and land use policy changes that limit, or in certain over-burden areas, prohibit new polluting facilities or infrastructure.
 - D. Monitor major air pollutants and ensure residents in areas of high air pollution are aware of existing air quality conditions and improvement plans and actions. Residents must also be informed of methods to reduce their exposure to pollution and have a clear process to report violations.
 - E. Increase Providence's tree canopy. Prioritize tree plantings in low-canopy areas where heat island index is high, and residents can experience the cooling (electricity savings), air pollution, and water filtration benefits.
 - F. Strive for all water bodies to be fishable, swimmable, and accessible, and to provide high quality, affordable drinking water to all residents. Ensure access to such clean water is equitable.
 - G. Increase lead safety, promote lead-safe housing, and protect the City's children and families from lead exposure. Meet regularly with partners (including the lead programs administered by the City, Providence Water and and the RI Department of Health) to share progress and accomplishments, discuss cases and questions, and coordinate services and activities.
 - H. Support urban agriculture by increasing access to community gardens and providing resources to urban growers.
 - I. School garden initiative / Green schoolyards
 - J. Reduce neurotoxic chemical exposures in parks, yards and other green spaces, inside homes and workplaces, as well as by private landowners, businesses, and landlords throughout the city, including the State.
 - K. Work towards the elimination of brownfields in Providence.

Objective SE4: Clean Energy

Transition to 100% clean energy supply in Providence, with a focus on local generation, equitable access, and energy democracy.

Strategies

- A. Transition to 100% carbon-free electricity by 2050, with an interim goal of 50% carbon-free electricity by 2035. Municipal operations should lead by example by transitioning to 100% renewable electricity by 2030. Local generation should account for at least 30% of this supply.
- B. Prioritize energy efficiency in the transition to renewable energy. Specifically, achieve a minimum of 30% energy use reduction by 2030 in all City-owned property.
- C. Increase the ownership of clean energy assets in Providence by frontline community organizations and individuals.
- D. Maximize the economic benefits and job creation, specifically for frontline communities, as Providence transitions to clean, renewable energy.
- E. Advocate and support a statewide shift to energy democracy. The state and utilities should partner with frontline community organizations to create mechanisms for collaborative governance around energy decisions. Specifically, ensure that residents understand how rates are decided and structured to ensure that they do not disproportionately burden low income households.
- F. Implement a Community Choice Aggregation program that prioritizes clean, local renewable energy while increasing affordability and energy democracy.
- G. Increase access to renewable energy, specifically for frontline communities, via community solar and other programs.
- H. Continue efforts to ensure the growing offshore wind industry can use Providence's industrial waterfront to site their supply chains. The companies using this infrastructure should be held to robust local workforce, environmental, and economic development targets.
- I. Address local impacts of regional power operations. Specifically, work with partners to ensure that the operation of Manchester Power--as part of the regional grid--measures, reports and reduces impacts on local air quality on a routine basis.

Objective SE5: Mobility / Transportation

Ensure that all Providence residents have access to clean and efficient public transportation and infrastructure that supports walking and riding bicycles, while reducing carbon and co-pollutants in the city, with a focus on areas with cumulative health impacts.

Strategies

- A. Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs) 11% by 2035 and 20% by 2050.
- B. Electrify transportation citywide. By 2035, 43% of VMTs in Providence are electric and by 2050, 80% of VMTs are electric.
- C. By 2035, increase the number of employers in Providence offering RIPTA's EcoPass to their employees from 50 to 200.

- D. Maximize efficiency of the City's current vehicle fleet and invest in electric vehicles and charging stations in order to achieve 100% of the City's fleet powered by renewable energy by 2040.
- E. Reduce emissions from school buses.
- F. Increase the number or percentage of City employees using alternative transportation to get to work.
- G. Evaluate and modify traffic patterns to reduce emissions in frontline communities.
- H. Identify resources and programs to improve efficiency and EV infrastructure for buses, garbage trucks, construction and other commercial trucks working in Providence's frontline communities.
- I. Advocate for investing in cleaner and more accessible public transportation.
- J. Ensure all road users have access to balanced, safe, and affordable transportation options.
- K. Invest in infrastructure to make walking and riding bicycles safer and more accessible, especially in low-income areas.
- L. Implement the Great Streets Plan.
- M. Expand bike share, scooter share, and other micro mobility options in low-income communities. Ensure options are carbon free and accessible.
- N. Advocate for the expansion of incentives for electric vehicles.

Objective SE6: Housing and Buildings

End displacement and ensure dignified housing and access to affordable, efficient and clean energy for Providence residents, while eliminating fossil fuel use in all buildings.

Strategies

- A. Upgrade municipal buildings to transition to zero energy buildings:
 - a. Conduct a municipal building electrification study to determine a plan for transitioning all City buildings off natural gas and oil and towards zero energy. This study should include community collaboration and prioritize buildings most used by and/or located in frontline communities, such as recreation centers, schools, and community libraries.
 - b. Continue efforts to improve building energy efficiency through lighting, HVAC, and building envelope/ weatherization upgrades.
 - c. Install on-site solar and high efficiency heat pumps or other clean alternatives to natural gas and fossil fuels to meet the goal of 100% renewable heating for municipal buildings by 2040.
- B. Design new municipal buildings to be zero energy. New buildings and major renovations should be built to be zero energy ready, meaning they are highly efficient buildings that do not burn fossil fuels on site.
- C. Work towards heating electrification citywide to meet the following targets:

- a. By 2035: 48% of residential heating and 45% of commercial converted to heat pumps.
- b. By 2050: 90% of residential heating and 85 percent of commercial converted to heat pumps.
- D. By 2040, reduce low-income energy burden to <5%. Low income energy burden is the percent of income that low-income households are spending on energy.
- E. Ensure all residents can benefit from energy efficiency improvements without concern for being displaced. Renters should not have their rent raised, be evicted, harassed, or otherwise pushed out when basic health, safety or energy efficiency improvements are made. Utility efficiency programs should implement safeguards for ensuring benefits of lower energy costs flow to renters, and are not all held by the landlord. Landlords should adhere to the Rhode Island Landlord/Tenant handbook and mitigate disruptions to renters of energy efficiency and electrification upgrades through actions such as informing tenants when improvements are to begin, and providing adequate accommodations during major energy improvements.
- F. Ensure community members have access to information about how to navigate services related to housing affordability and anti-displacement including:
 - a. Greater dissemination of Landlord Tenant Handbook to ensure tenants know their rights on and off-line. Consider requirements for landlords to provide a handbook upon lease of property.
 - b. Support for low-barrier community legal aid programs.
 - c. Assisting people to navigate services and apply for affordable housing.
 - d. Improve access to information about land trust housing opportunities in Providence.
- G. Develop a local model and assessment plan with frontline communities for “Community Benefit Agreements” (CBA) and investigate requiring them for large new developments and redevelopments, particularly those that receive public dollars/subsidies. Under a CBA, the developer would assess the impact to the surrounding neighborhood including impacts related to housing affordability/displacement, transportation/traffic, local jobs, carbon and air pollution emissions, and health. The developer would then work with community members to minimize negative impacts through the agreement.
- H. Explore mechanisms to prioritize affordable housing for displaced populations. Work with the Providence Housing Authority to develop a process that prioritizes housing for those that have historically been displaced from their communities in Providence. This could be modeled off the Community Preference ordinance in Seattle, which enabled affordable housing providers to prioritize those with historic connections to the communities that have been most harmed by the legacy of discrimination and segregation.
- I. Pass a Building Energy Reporting Ordinance (BERO) that requires building owners to report their energy use and carbon emissions to the City and mandates action to improve energy performance for buildings over 10,000 square feet. The City would then ensure that building energy and emissions information is made readily available to the public, especially to renters, tenants, and prospective renters and buyers.
- J. Explore mandatory emissions reductions for large buildings.

- K. Require homes and small buildings to disclose their energy performance at the time of rental or sale. Apply to buildings under 10,000 square feet or those not covered by BERO. Such a policy helps prospective owners and renters understand how expensive their energy bills will be. Create a clearinghouse of information where energy performance of homes for rent or sale is made available and accessible.
- L. Advocate for the state of Rhode Island to adopt more advanced energy code standards.
- M. Expand knowledge of and access to existing energy efficiency programs. This effort should explore the following:
 - a. Identify specific barriers to participation among LMI populations, including through existing and/or future participation studies
 - b. Make programs more accessible and consumer-friendly.
 - c. Ensure that on-bill financing includes inclusive financing that can help frontline communities access energy efficiency upgrades.
 - d. Employ community members to engage with their communities about existing programs like discount and disability programs, etc.
 - e. Expand cross-referrals between existing programs (e.g. CAPP and Home Repair) and encourage greater use of OneTouch referral system by all home-visiting housing service providers.
- N. Expand energy efficiency, energy access, clean energy and electrification programs to better serve low-income communities, renters, and other underserved populations: This work should seek to:
 - a. Create protections for Providence low income residents through programs like Percentage Income Payment Plan (PIPP) which allows low-income households to pay a fixed percentage of their income for utility bills.
 - b. Prioritize efficiency programs for small businesses and nonprofits, with a focus on locally owned businesses and grassroots organizations for energy improvements, to support retrofits, and green economy transition.
 - c. Expand the cold-climate heat pump program for income eligible customers introduced in 2019.
- O. Identify additional funding for energy efficiency investments in frontline communities and ensure that energy efficiency programs meet the need in low and moderate income households regardless of a household's credit score, or utility bill payment history or ability to pay. Consider the following sources of funding:
 - a. As guidelines permit, increase funding for the Community Development Block Grant-funded City Home Repair Program to serve a greater number of households, and expand marketing of the program and emphasize focus on energy efficiency.
 - b. Support the Providence Housing Authority to leverage funding to conduct energy audits of properties and make energy improvements and eliminate the use of natural gas in their buildings.
 - c. Leverage funding by coupling efficiency upgrades with healthy homes improvements, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM)¹⁷ and environmental hazard mitigation/ remediation (including mold, lead, asbestos and radon). In

addition, energy efficiency investments should be coupled with routine maintenance and capital investments in buildings.

- P. Work with the state to prevent utility shut-offs and integrate fair rate structures that do not penalize lower consumption users disproportionately. Ensure the PUC is able to consider the impact of health, climate pollution and other social effects of energy infrastructure in their decisions.
- Q. Continue to increase participation in the RePowerPVD Energy Challenge.

Objective SE7: Local and Regenerative Economy

Build a sustainable, zero-waste economy in Providence, one in which we produce and consume to live well without living better at the expense of others, with a focus on supporting local businesses and creating meaningful work for local frontline community members.

Strategies

- A. Meet annual targets of 10% of City spending in municipal purchases of goods and services from state-certified women-owned enterprises and 10% of City spending in municipal purchases of goods and services from state-certified minority-owned enterprises as outlined in City ordinance.
- B. Create workforce development programs to support a just transition away from fossil fuels. Create programs that will help prepare frontline communities to have meaningful work in the carbon-free economy. This should include training and education in industries such as construction, energy efficiency, clean energy, electrical trades and engineering, including job training for frontline community members to provide education and implementation of energy efficiency and electrification services. It should also:
 - a. Support self-employment and cooperatives for frontline community members, especially in industries that foster a regenerative economy.
 - b. Create partnerships with frontline community businesses and community organizations to deliver training, efficiency, and renewable energy services and products.
 - c. Train local employers, especially in the clean energy industry, in racial equity and sustainability practices, and provide guidelines that support the training, hiring and retention of local, frontline community members. Create a clear definition for just transition, circular, local and regenerative economy businesses and operations for Providence.
- C. Strengthen City policies supporting local frontline community workers and businesses. Continue efforts to ensure compliance with the First Source Ordinance, which supports local hiring. Implement additional policies to improve local labor conditions, especially for frontline communities. This includes supporting unionized labor and providing a dignified wage, paid time off and other benefits. In addition, work with the state to improve accessibility of becoming W/MBE certified for small businesses.

- D. Create employment pipelines for local residents to work at the port: Review local hiring needs processes within the port area and identify ways to make these jobs more accessible to port-area residents.
- E. By 2040, eliminate food waste in Providence starting with the following programs:
 - a. Create a recognition program for local businesses that are composting and engaging in responsible waste management.
 - b. City-wide community composting program: work with local community groups to pilot community composting throughout the City. Use various models of neighborhood composting that incorporate curbside pickup, multiple drop-off locations, incentivize at-home composting, etc. Ensure that the resulting composting program will not economically or otherwise burden communities of color.
 - c. Explore opportunities to reduce waste through programs such as “gleaning,” where crops that would otherwise be wasted are harvested and donated to those in need.
- F. Increase carbon sequestration in soils through composting. Explore the benefits of adding compost to soils to increase carbon sequestration and stormwater runoff treatment capacity. Continue to promote local use of finished compost.